



required, and I set Plavinski, who among his many other aptitudes was a good caricaturist, to work at depicting Hitler (who, heaven knows, must have spent many sleepless nights vainly waiting for the fall of Stalingrad) as the watcher who died, while sitting up on the edge of the bed, stretching and rubbing the sleep from his eyes, was the figure of Stalin as the patient who suddenly revived.

It had been decided to invite to a reception at the British Information Centre, for the opening of the exhibition, not only the Corps Diplomatique but a number of Russian and other Allied Military officers. As most of these officers would be unable to read Persian it was essential to have an English translation of the Sa'di verse below the cartoon. I fancy it was Plavinski who suggested that I should write a verse translation to clarify the meaning of the picture—a task I accomplished in time for the opening of the exhibition, where the cartoon appeared as the centre-piece of the display devoted to the defence of Stalingrad, with Sa'di's verse and mine inscribed below it. Thus did one of these Poems from the Persian make its anonymous first bow in public.

Not long after, when the British and American landings in Sicily had been successfully accomplished, we needed a suitable quotation for a cartoon depicting Hitler and Mussolini with their backs to a cliff, quailing before the rising tide of Allied victories. It proved much more difficult to find a suitable quotation for this picture, but after much searching Vejdany discovered among the poems of Farrukhi, who lived over nine hundred years ago, a verse which specifically mentioned the word 'mehwar', which means 'axis', and has been applied in modern Persian to the once much-vaunted German-Italian Axis. Unfortunately in Farrukhi's verse the tides are described as being obedient to the axis of the moon and the earth, which was not the meaning we wished to convey.

and send it to me in a fortnight's time. What became of his half-finished painting of a falconer upon a dappled horse I never learned, for in spite of the many letters I wrote to Plavinski himself, and to the secretary who had succeeded Mlle Levita, I never again set eyes on that cover, nor did Plavinski ever write¹ to tell me what became of it.

The story has, I am glad to say, a happy ending. I had the good fortune to return in 1945, not merely to Persia, but to Shiraz, which, since it is the birthplace of both Sa'di and Hafiz, and is also famous for its wine, its nightingales, and its roses, is generally considered to be the poetic capital of Persia. While I was there Aqa'i Sha'isteh, who is the most famous living artist of that town, carried out to my great satisfaction the design which appears upon the cover. Thus, after a delay of two years this book, which is devoted to the exposition of Persian poetry, was completed in Persia by a Persian artist.

BAGH-I-SHAIKH,

SHIRAZ,

October 1945.

¹ The letter which I subsequently received from Monsieur Plavinski, written in his own inimitable style on the back of a Christmas card, is at page 105.



آنگه مناره میدزد و اول چاهش را حفر میکند، در پاش.

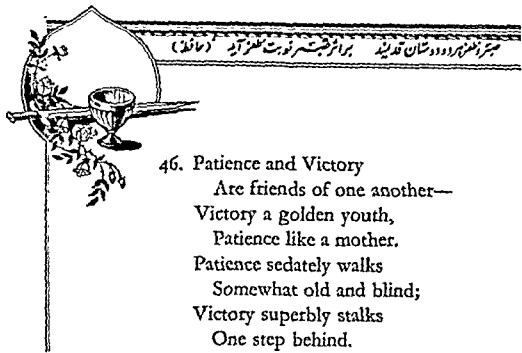
A PERSIAN PROVERB

36. If ever on a Minaret
 Your mind dishonestly you set,
 First dig a well with space inside it
 Where you can lay your prize—to hide it!

POEMS FROM THE PERSIAN

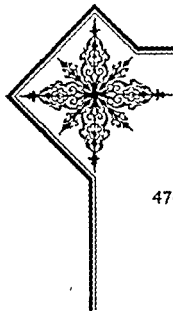
JOHN CHARLES EDWARD BOWEN

BASIL BLACKWELL • OXFORD • MCMXLVIII



46. Patience and Victory
 Are friends of one another—
 Victory a golden youth,
 Patience like a mother.
 Patience sedately walks
 Somewhat old and blind;
 Victory superbly stalks
 One step behind.
 Unto us who have endured
 He bears a golden cup—
 And in the evening, Hafiz says,
 That step he catches up.

BY THE SAME AUTHOR
(*Under the pseudonym of 'Lancer'*)
VERSE: GRIM AND GAY



بزه خویش اگر دست آوری به که از شهد کسان انجمن لیسی
(جایی)

47. However many friends you have,
 However kind they are,
 Your own stale loaf is better than
 Another's honey-jar.

TO
MY MOTHER
WHO HAD' A LOVING ADMIRATION
FOR THE ART AND POETRY OF PERSIA
LONG BEFORE I WAS BORN

PREFACE

by

HIS EXCELLENCY AQA'I S. H. TAQIZADEH

lately Iranian Ambassador at the Court of St. James

It was flattering to me, who am neither a connoisseur of English literature, nor can pretend to be a man of letters in Persian literature in the strict sense of the term, to be asked by an English poet to write the preface to a book of poetry. But I could not refuse the request of a man of letters of elegant taste, who while living in my country has become so well acquainted with our famous poets that, in appreciation of their genius, he became desirous to represent their thoughts in the eloquent language of English poetry. This form of translation is a work which I highly recommend to my compatriots, because through this medium shining gems of literature can be produced, like those which are to be found in Mr. Bowen's short but well-strung anthology. I offer my thanks to Mr. Bowen for his masterly rendering of Persian poetry into English verse, from which I am sure that those of my countrymen who know English will derive as much delight as I have myself.

A translation is never completed until it has become a piece of original verse in the new tongue.

JAMES STEPHENS

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A PERSIAN PROVERB

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

IN addition to the various persons mentioned elsewhere, I am deeply indebted for his introduction to His Excellency Aqa'i Sayyed Hasan Taqizadeh, lately Iranian Ambassador at the Court of St. James, who is famous, not only as a man of letters, but for the outstanding part he played as one of the leaders of the Persian Constitutional Revolution of 1906. I wish to express my gratitude to Mr. Abdullah Jan, who, besides guiding my first faltering steps in the Persian language, introduced me, during a bitterly cold journey through Khurasan, to the beauty of Omar Khayyam's poetry in the original Persian. I would like to thank Professor S. M. Abdullah, of the University of the Punjab, and Mr. Abdul Qayyum, of Manshra High School, for their valuable help; and to acknowledge my debt to the scholarship of Khan Sahib Ali Ferjad, of Bushire, whose researches among the various Persian authorities have greatly assisted me in writing my biographical sketches of the Poets. In conclusion, I would like to thank my Assistant at the Public Relations Bureau, Miss Betty Stephenson, for obtaining and sending me, long after I had left Tehran, a copy of the design from the Ala Qapu in Isfahan, without which Aqa'i Sha'isteh would have been unable to execute the painting which embellishes the cover of the book.

Acknowledgements are due to the Editors of *Blackwood's Magazine*, *Chambers's Journal*, and *The Civil and Military Gazette*, Lahore, in whose pages some of the following translations have already appeared.

POEMS FROM THE PERSIAN

'A SECRET HISTORY'

There is, perhaps, in everything of any consequence, a secret history which it would be amusing to know, could we have it authentically communicated.

Boswell's 'Life of Johnson'

Most of the fifty verse translations contained in this book were written at Qulhak, which is a village close to Tehran in the north of Persia, during a period of intense creative activity in the course of the spring and early summer of 1943. I was fortunate at that time in having as my *Chef de Studio* in Tehran a Polish artist of genius, named Anatole Plavinski, who had spent the previous twenty years in Persia. So I had at my side, while most of the poems in this book were taking shape, an artist with a real knowledge and love of Persia such as, I believe, no previous translator of Persian poetry has had the good fortune to employ. But the idea of collecting the poems in book form, and illustrating them, did not emerge until later.

Up to the beginning of March 1943, the only Persian poetry I had translated was a quatrain from Omar Khayyam, which I had attempted in order to beguile my companion and myself when delayed by snow at a Caravanserai upon the road to Meshed two years earlier. When, in European fashion, I expressed impatience at the delay my companion who, like all Persians, could think of a verse to fit every occasion, quoted to me a verse from Omar Khayyam which I put into English as:

'For scattered petals never sigh,
Nor for To-morrow vainly cry,
Be happy *now* . . .'

My next translation was, similarly, a poem which urges the discarding of grief and the enjoyment of the present. The original Persian couplet by Ibn Yamin contains an idea which is so sensible, and so far removed from the mysticism and obscurity which is often associated with Persian poetry, that I give here a literal translation of it: 'The thing which has passed is past—don't think of it any more, for it is not sensible to renew an old grief.' This I rendered freely into English in the poem which commences:

'The grief that is past let it pass . . .'

It was not entirely a coincidence that the theme of the second poem so closely resembled that of the first. For my rendering of Ibn Yamin was written during a journey towards the south-east of Persia, which I had to undertake early in March 1943. At Kerman I stayed with an old friend and fellow Indian Cavalryman, Major W. M. T. Magan, at whose fireside I sat until late that night while he and a Punjabi captain named ¹Mohammed Hassan flung quotations from the Persian poets to and fro between them, while I sat and struggled with my memory—vainly trying to recall the exact Persian of the quotation which I had translated two years before. It was Hassan who supplied the lines from Ibn Yamin. This verse was not the one I was after, but it is one which is much quoted in Persia, and its downright common sense and lack of frills immediately appealed to me. The next day when I continued my journey across the great desert towards Zahidan I took with me the Persian of Ibn Yamin for the Muse to brood upon, and by the end of that long journey she had produced from my sub-conscious the English poem which now finds a place in this book.

Our search for the Omar Khayyam quotation that evening

¹ Now *Chargé d'Affaires* for Pakistan at Tehran.

led us to another poem of Omar's, which, though very famous in Persia, was as far as I know never translated by Fitzgerald, possibly because it would not have fitted into that incomparable picture of Eastern melancholy which he created, but more likely, I think, because a conversation between a priest and a wanton, in which the latter had the last word, would not have fallen happily upon mid-Victorian ears. Personally I was delighted to discover this new and witty aspect of Omar Khayyam. It was a revelation to find how lightly and effectively he could handle such a theme. I think I can say that it was the common sense of Ibn Yamin, the wit of Omar Khayyam, and the clarity of both of them, which first induced me to try my hand at translating the Persian poets.

I returned to Tehran in March 1943 to a Bureau greatly saddened by the death in an air-crash in the mountains near Hamadan of our brilliant and charming Director, Stephen Childs. He had been the inspiration of myself and of his other young lieutenants in the Public Relations Bureau; but though he was no longer present to guide our endeavours, his teaching lived on in all we did. One of the methods which Stephen had taught us was to drive home the point of any important piece of propaganda by linking it with a quotation from one of those poets whose verses in Persia are constantly upon the lips of even the poorest of the people. It was a technique which had already been tried out with conspicuous success on the Tehran Radio, when, at Stephen's request, the Assistant Military Attaché, Lt.-Colonel Douglas Pybus, whose knowledge of both Sa'di and of the Persian language is profound, broadcast a conversation between himself and the poet regarding the War and the then precarious wheat situation in Persia. Sa'di's share of the conversation took the form of verses from the Gulistan, which came out so pat,

and pointed the argument so neatly, that they sounded as if they had been written especially for the broadcast. When asked, for instance, whether it was unreasonable to expect Iranian farmers to meet as far as possible Persia's own requirements of grain, Sa'di answered in one of his most famous couplets: 'He who gains his daily bread by his own effort has no need to depend on the generosity of Hatim Tai'.¹ It was now my turn to put this technique to good effect in the sphere of Visual Publicity.

I had at that time to prepare an exhibition at the British Information Centre in Tehran to celebrate the surrender of the German armies in Tunisia, which had just taken place. It was our practice to link our military triumphs with those of the Red Army, and it was therefore natural, in an exhibition depicting the North African campaign as the turn of the tide in our warfare, to devote a section to the heroic Russian defence of Stalingrad, which could even then be recognized as the turning point in Russia's struggle with Germany. I had the good fortune to possess as translator in the Visual Publicity Section a cultured Persian gentleman named Vejdany, who had resigned a post in the Ministry of Home Affairs in order to undertake work at Victory House. As Monsieur Vejdany had an exceptionally wide knowledge of Persian literature I set him to work to find a suitable verse to use as a motto for the defence of Stalingrad. It did not take him long to produce for my approval the well-known verse from Sa'di which describes how a healthy man watched all night beside one who was dangerously ill, and the piquant situation which occurred when at dawn it was found that the sick man had recovered, and that death had carried off the watcher instead. This was exactly the motif which was

¹ The unfailing hospitality of a legendary Arab named Hatim Tai is a byword in Persia.

In any case the Muse had by now got tired of propaganda, and however much I tried she refused admittance to the harsh and uncompromising word 'Axis'. So I gave it up and used instead the gentler, but no less compelling word, influence. This explains why in a book in which so many famous lines of Persian poetry are included, there is to be found this one couplet which, though beautiful and significant, is unfamiliar to the great majority of Persians.

I felt that the time had now come to spread my net wider; for, of the poets represented in the first five poems I had translated, only Sa'di ranks, in the estimation of his fellow-countrymen, with Firdausi and Hafiz as one of the three greatest poets of Persia. The idea now began to take shape in my head that I might be able to render into English verse a sufficient number of famous couplets and verses to make an anthology representative of some of the most beautiful and famous lines in Persian poetry—an anthology so selected as to afford pleasure not only to English readers but also to Iranians reading it in the original Persian.

I accordingly asked Vejdany to start making for me a selection of his favourite passages from the Persian poets. I soon had to add the proviso that the passages must be such as I could reasonably expect to translate into English verse. For I found that it was no use attempting to bridge the gap between Persian and English poetry where no affinity of ideas exists. In Persia, for instance, where a fair skin is particularly admired, a black mole is thought to set off the pallor of a girl's face, and is greatly admired accordingly; and whereas the moisture which may occasionally bedew the brow of his mistress, is politely ignored by an English poet, a Persian will delight in describing beads of perspiration as gems and pearls adorning his Beloved's face. Similarly, I

made no attempt to put into English the mystic ideas of Sufism to which much Persian poetry is devoted, since they are alien to Western thought and have no counterpart in English literature.

I found that, even when I excluded such poems, some of which were among Vejdany's favourites, I had an amazing profusion of beautiful and telling poetry from which to choose. It was like suddenly viewing a meadow full of delightful flowers, and being invited to gather as many as I could. But, with my newly-taken resolve like a pilgrim's load upon my back, I was now impelled to do something more than merely admire the unusual plants which I had discovered. I felt I must try to transfer them to paper, for the eyes of my own countrymen to see, as far as possible in their original freshness and beauty.

It was, I am sure, partly the joy of having my wife with me after a separation of fifteen months during which I had written no poetry, and partly the influence of the spring weather, that gave the Persian poets, with whom through Vejdany I was now beginning to become acquainted, such an impact on me at that period that, waking and sleeping, my subconscious mind became preoccupied with fitting English verses to passages of Persian poetry: so much so that I sometimes managed to complete a verse translation within a period of twenty-four hours, and on one occasion achieved three in a day.

I have a special reason for mentioning the season, for much of the lyric poetry of Persia is a reflection of that brief period when spring, as if pursuing the melting snow, walks with restless feet through the gardens and over the green meadows of Qulhak, bringing to flower in quick succession the sky-blue hyacinths, the small yellow tulips, narcissus, the plum and cherry blossom, and the wild iris, only to scatter them with a light and cruel hand before they have flowered for

more than a few days. Life during the centuries when most of the classical poetry of Persia was being written, when the country was being ravaged by invaders as cruel and destructive as Ghengiz Khan and Timur, must have had much in common with the beauty and brevity of the Persian spring. This accounts for the pessimism which appears to colour the work of so many Persian poets; though if we recall the insecurity of their lives, when the whim of a conqueror might mean torture or death, we can hardly accuse the Persian poets of being unduly pessimistic. They accepted uncomplainingly, and expressed in verse, the terms of life over which a fate which often proved malignant seemed to preside, and in so doing made us heirs to many magnificent poems, whose theme is that the cruelty and injustice of our brief lives are tolerable because of the consolations which God has bestowed upon mankind. Thus we find Sa'di bidding the nightingale sing the more sweetly because that harbinger of death, the owl, will soon be summoning him; Firdausi describes the scorching flame of death which indiscriminately sweeps away both young and old; and Omar Khayyam, in a poem which always brings to my mind the variable sunshine and rain of an April day, describes a cloud weeping on the green shoulder of a hill. 'Life,' he exclaims, 'would be unbearable if we could not console ourselves by drinking red wine together.' Such were the poems which I was now translating, whose themes accorded with the celerity with which that spring fled by.

After I had completed about a dozen poems it occurred to me that, if they were to be published in the *Tehran Daily News*, they might serve a dual purpose in showing educated Persians that we were not heedless of their literature, and at the same time remind the large number of British and Americans, who were then in Tehran, that Persia has produced

many great and eloquent poets besides Omar Khayyam. I realized that, if the translations were to be published in a Tehran newspaper, they would inevitably become a target for criticism by people who knew the exact *nuances* of meaning of the original poems. My first step, therefore, was to ask that brilliant Orientalist, Miss Nancy Lambton, whom I was fortunate to have as a colleague at the Bureau, to 'vet' my translations. I was careful to explain that I had tried to translate into English verse the spirit rather than the exact words of the original Persian. Nancy accepted the translations on these terms, and, after making some minor criticisms, told me that she considered that the poems kept sufficiently close to the Persian for publication in the *Daily News*. Once she had approved I had no difficulty in persuading Philip Lorraine, who was the Editor of the *Daily News*, that a series of 'Poems from the Persian' would be a suitable addition to the four-page Supplement into which the *Daily News* blossomed every Saturday morning.

Knowing that the *Daily News* press had no fount of Persian lettering, and that there was, therefore, apparently no possibility of reproducing the Persian alongside my translation, I chose as the first of the series a verse about a willow-branch by the ever-popular Sa'di, my translation of which kept so close to the original as to be clearly recognizable. I left to Philip the question of where in the newspaper page the poem was to appear, hoping that it would be given a position which would accord with what I secretly considered to be its worth as part of an entirely fresh presentation of the Persian poets. To my disgust the verse appeared at the tail-end of the back page, wedged, like an afterthought, into half an inch of space, with Sa'di's name not even mentioned. The next day I went into urgent conference with Plavinski, to try and evolve some means of ensuring that the poems should in future appear

with sufficient space round them, to give them dignity and to make them easily readable. We came to the conclusion that the only way to ensure a proper lay-out was to have each poem in some sort of frame wide enough to fit into a column of the newspaper, and long enough from top to bottom for the poem to be printed without looking cramped. We eventually decided that our purpose would be served if we prepared the frame in the shape of a T-square, the left-hand panel of which would contain a pen-and-ink drawing by Plavinski illustrating the poem, and the upper panel the calligraphed script of the Persian. By having the two panels photographed and reproduced as a line block we took advantage of the highly decorative qualities of Persian script, and at the same time enabled Persians to read the original verse from which my translation had been made.

At first we fitted the calligraphy into a mosaic border, but this pattern took some time to complete, and as the design generally had to be finished each week in a hurry, after the third poem had appeared the mosaic was omitted and the script fitted into the top panel without any additional decoration. I do not regard this as a loss because the new arrangement enabled the calligraphy to be carried out with a reed pen, which gave the script a bolder and, to my mind, more decorative effect. In Persia much attention is paid to good script, and calligraphy is an honoured profession. Our leading calligrapher, Zarin Khat, whose name means 'The Golden Line', whose father and grandfather had both followed the same calling, is one of the best calligraphers in Tehran, and I am very glad to have been able to reproduce so many examples of his work.

I sometimes wonder whether the readers of the *Tehran Daily News* realized the intense and varied labour which went to the reproduction of the apparently simply illustrated poems,

which appeared in the Saturday Supplement week after week for a period of about eight months. There was first of all Vejdany's work of selection. As I read Persian somewhat slowly, he used to write down for me in French a number of Persian poems which he thought suitable for translation. If any of these seemed to ring a bell in the back of my consciousness I would go through the Persian carefully with him to make sure that I had understood the *nuances* of the original poem before attempting to translate it. If I succeeded in putting it into English verse I would check it carefully with Vejdany before handing it over to my Polish secretary, Mlle Levita, to translate into Polish to enable Plavinski to start thinking how the poem could best be illustrated. Sometimes he saw at once what the drawing should be and went ahead with it himself, but more often we worked out the design together. When the picture had been completed and set in its framework it was handed on, together with the original Persian, for Zarin Khat to write the script in the upper panel. Thus was the cycle of four languages—Persian, French, English, Polish, and Persian—completed.

My work was then by no means over. I next had to take the drawing to the *Daily News* office in order to obtain Philip Lorraine's grudging approval; for Philip, who had been a Dramatic Critic in London and an R.A.F. Flying Officer before coming to the Bureau as Editor of the *Daily News*, had so many difficulties to contend with in producing what was by then a first-rate English newspaper, that he was frequently out of humour; but even when he was at his most exasperating, I could not help feeling a warm affection for him. Whenever, for instance, I brought Plavinski's latest drawing into his editorial den and greeted him with the words 'This week I have an absolute masterpiece for you', his only reaction would be a grunt and the remark that, unless I could

get the drawing to him earlier the next week, he would have to discontinue the series. We generally managed to have the drawing ready, even when it had to be re-drawn several times to meet my somewhat exacting requirements, by midday on Saturday, but sometimes, when the subject had proved intractable or when there had been a rush of other work, it could not be handed over till Monday morning. Then, of course, sparks flew, for the drawing had next to be sent to the *Itla'at* Press, who liked to have several days in which to prepare the block. Here again, even when the drawing was ready in time, we often ran into trouble, for the *Itla'at* equipment was old-fashioned, and we found that it simply could not reproduce some of the more delicate features of Plavinski's drawings. In the second¹ poem to be illustrated, for example, Plavinski had finely shaded the hill, which appears in the distance and which was intended to represent the idea of a distant Paradise. In the block the far hill appeared like a nearby ploughed field, so I had to take it down to the Press at the last minute and have the whole of the distant hill cut out, leaving, in the illustration as it appeared in the *Daily News*, merely a bitter tree growing upon a barren rock. In the same way we found that the *Itla'at* Press could not reproduce the delicate shading on the rose in the picture illustrating the Hafiz poem about the rose and the nightingale, so the rose which appeared in the *Daily News* had to be left unshaded, and looked a pale cousin of the 'little red rose-bud' of that poem. These considerations led to a broadening in Plavinski's method of presentation, and is responsible for the fact that some of his later drawings look almost as if they had been designed as wood engravings. But only by so doing could we compensate for the primitive machinery by which the illustrations had to be reproduced.

Eventually I took to carrying the drawing down to the Press

¹ At page 27.

myself, so that I could discuss with the fat and jolly *Itla'at* printer any problems which might arise in connection with the preparation of each block before he started work upon it. Even then my labours were not over, for I found that our compositors at Victory House were so inexperienced in dealing with the setting up of English verse that they often failed to set the print of the poem in proper relationship to its frame. Moreover, since the *Daily News* printing press itself was very old (it had originally come to Tehran from what is now Czechoslovakia early in the present century) many of the letters were worn out, and unless I personally supervised the substitution of sound letters for the faulty ones my poem was liable to be almost unreadable when it appeared in print. All these cares, however, were forgotten in that supremely satisfactory moment when, late on Friday night, after looking in on Philip (who, once the paper had been 'put to bed', was ready enough for a friendly chat), I would walk across the passage with him to watch sheet after sheet of the Supplement coming off the rotary press. There, in the lower half of the back page, carefully composed, calligraphed, illustrated, and set out in print, was clearly visible number so-and-so of the paper's weekly feature—'Poems from the Persian'!

An introductory essay about this book would be incomplete without a mention of the part played in its preparation by P. E. Fawkes, Monsieur Romanovski, Mlle Kozminski, and Mlle Tomaseo. The pseudonym 'P. E. Fawkes' cloaks the identity of a young lady of genius, for whom Deborah and I have a great admiration and affection. A graduate of the Slade School of Art, she was at that time employing her spare time illustrating the Behind the News feature of the *Tehran Daily News*. This she did with such skill and humour that when I came to translate a trio of Sa'di's verses about

animals—verses that always remind me of La Fontaine's fables—I felt that only she could do them justice. It is to her that I am indebted for the pictures of 'The Donkey Who Grew Horns', 'The Lean Quadruped', and 'The Elephant Who Came To Tea'.

Even when these pictures had been added to the collection there were a number of poems, such as Sa'di's comparison between a nugget and a stone, which Plavinski and I reluctantly decided were not susceptible of illustration. At this moment Monsieur Romanovski de Banca, who is a distinguished artist and an old friend of mine, came to the rescue. Monsieur Romanovski had served the Czar before the war of 1914-1918 as Consul in Seistan, and after the Russian Revolution had made Tehran his home. Being not only very skilful with his brush but also an authority on ancient Iranian armour and weapons, he was chosen by Messrs. De La Rue to design the admirable set of Persian playing cards which enjoyed a considerable vogue in Persia during the latter years of the reign of Reza Shah. Happening to meet Monsieur Romanovski in the Khiaban-i-Firdausi, I told him of our dilemma and suggested that he should design some decorations for the remaining poems. He declined the invitation for himself, but promised to help, and a few days later an artist *protégée* of his, a young Russian girl named Mlle Kozminski, started work in our studio. She based her drawings partly on a book of old Persian designs, published by the Tehran *Bureau des Beaux Arts*, and partly on the patterns of exhibits in the great Exhibition of Persian Art held in London in 1931, of which I happened to possess an illustrated catalogue. I found that Mlle Kozminski had a genius for picking out beautiful old patterns and presenting them afresh in black and white; and, in a remarkably short space of time, she carried out the decoration of all the poems which we had found it impossible to illustrate.

I had to leave Tehran in October 1943 before all the drawings had been completed, and Plavinski departed a few months later to join the Polish Army in Italy leaving a number of illustrations which we had planned together in detail unfinished. As if sufficient nationalities were not already represented in this book I must mention here the part played by a Yugo-Slav in completing the series of drawings. Before leaving Tehran we had become friends with the daughter of the newly-arrived Yugo-Slav Minister, Mlle Justine Tomaseo, who was (and I am sure still is) as attractive as her own name, and whose drawings showed her to be an accomplished artist. When I suggested to the head of the Bureau that Mlle Tomaseo should be employed as an artist in the Section whose direction I was then relinquishing, I little thought that she would later repay this small courtesy by executing the last few drawings which were needed to complete the book. It is Justine I have to thank for the picture of the White Gazelle in the Hafiz poem, and for the drawings illustrating two of the poems¹ by Farrukhi.

When about two dozen of the poems had appeared with their illustrations in the *Daily News* Supplement I decided that it ought to be possible to reproduce them later in the form of a book. Whereupon Plavinski and I started to rack our brains as to what form the cover should take. He was strongly in favour of depicting a naked girl upon the jacket as this, he assured me, was bound to have a wide appeal, whereas I favoured an adaptation of some old Persian design as being more in keeping with the contents of the book. We eventually decided to adapt a picture of a falconer from the volume of designs published by the *Bureau des Beaux Arts*. This design is connected with Persian history, for the original

¹ Those at pages 34 and 35.

picture is painted on one of the walls of the Ala Qapu—that high pavilion overlooking the Maidan in Isfahan built by Shah Abbas, from the shade of which he used to watch polo being played in the Great Square below.

I was anxious that the cover of the book should have the qualities of a poster—to catch the eye and arouse the interest of anyone who saw it on a bookstall. I hoped to attract the eye by using vivid colours, and to stimulate further interest by reproducing an authentic old Persian picture. I turned for guidance in the selection of colours to Monsieur Romanovski's playing cards, to the admirable qualities of which I have already referred. Though only the colours of the falconer's coat and breeches are the same as that of the seated figure on Romanovski's cards, the effect achieved is, I think, no less satisfactory than that obtained on a smaller scale by the playing cards.

Although I had frequently told Plavinski that there was every likelihood of my being transferred from Tehran in the autumn, he cherished an idea of his own that some act of God would prevent my departure, and he remained quite unmoved by my exhortations that he should start work on the cover. When he eventually took the work in hand it was too late. Two days before my departure from Tehran, and while the design was still only half completed, I received an urgent call for the completion of the cover of a new Persian magazine, *Abang*, which was shortly to start publication in Delhi, and the cover design of which was to be despatched by the Courier with whom Deborah and I were leaving Tehran. The cover for *Poems from the Persian* had, therefore, to be abandoned, and the design of three bold and graceful swans against a yellow background took its place upon Plavinski's drawing board. Plavinski assured me that this substitution would make no difference, and that he would complete the design in colours

FIRDAUSI

A.D. 935-1020

*My manhood's thirty years I spent
In hunger, toil, and strife;
And by this Persian tongue itself
Brought Persia back to life.*

Firdausi (in his satire on Sultan Mahmud)

FIRDAUSI, who is in some respects the greatest poetic genius that Persia has ever produced, was born at an opportune moment in his country's history. The tide of Arab conquest, which the teachings of the Prophet Mohammed inspired his countrymen to undertake, had so swiftly engulfed Iran (much weakened by internal strife and by its long struggle with the Roman Empire), that by A.D. 650 the armies of the Caliphate had occupied every Persian province as far as Balkh and the river Oxus.

Having thus speedily overrun the Persian Empire, the Arabs adopted measures which they hoped would destroy the homogeneity of the Persian nation, and prevent it from ever recovering its former glory and power. They tried to achieve this by imposing on Persia their own Mohammedan religion, which, since it ordained that the representation of man or beast is objectionable to God, served as a pretext for their destruction of most of the magnificent sculpture of ancient Iran. Fortunately this prohibition was never taken seriously by the Persians themselves, or it would have effectively prevented the development of Persian miniature painting. This art Firdausi unwittingly did much to foster, by providing in his great Shah Nameh a series of scenes which, because they depicted the heroic age of Iran and were so

eminently suitable for illustration, caught the imagination of the Persian miniaturists, who in subsequent centuries produced miracles of colour and design to embellish the Book of Kings.

Together with an alien religion the Arabs essayed the more difficult task of imposing their own language. As not only the official religion, but also all the official business of the newly-established Arab Empire, was conducted in Arabic, the Arab language inevitably came to be widely adopted in those parts of Persia which were easily accessible from Baghdad, where the Caliph, who had assumed the status of the Shadow of God on Earth, wielded supreme power over his subjects in all matters both spiritual and temporal.

As was natural, however, the Arab hold over the remote and mountainous areas to the east and north-east of Persia was weaker than elsewhere; and just as successive waves of Anglo-Saxon and Danish invasion forced large numbers of Celts to take refuge in the remote hills of western Britain, where they were able to preserve their own language, legends, and poetry, so, many Persians sought refuge in the oases of eastern Persia—at Yezd, where a great part of the population to this day still practices the Zoroastrian religion—in Seistan, where the legends of the hero Rustam, and his son Sohrab (of which Matthew Arnold has given us a beautiful English rendering) first arose, and in the ancient desert-locked centres of civilization—Merv, Bukhara, Balkh, and Samarcand.

Gradually in the ninth and tenth centuries A.D., as the Persians recovered from the numbing effects of their defeat, and as the Arab hold over the remoter provinces of their Empire weakened, a number of native Iranian dynasties emerged, the founders of which were usually Persians of noble birth who had been appointed Governors of the great eastern provinces and who, without throwing off the suzerainty of

the Caliphate, succeeded in establishing themselves as independent rulers. The restoration of independence to even a part of Iran had a most invigorating effect on the national consciousness, and modern Persia owes much to these princes for the great impulse they gave to the patriotic feelings and national poetry of their fellow-countrymen.

The most important new dynasty was founded in A.D. 876 by a Persian nobleman of Balkh, named Saman, whose descendants established their capital at Bukhara and succeeded during the next 120 years in bringing not merely Transoxiana and Khurasan but much of the rest of Persia under their sway. The Samanians were renowned for the encouragement they gave to poets, and one of the last of their line, the Emir Nuh II (A.D. 976-996), entrusted the task of writing a verse Shah Nameh, or Book of Kings, to his Court Poet, a Zoroastrian named Daqiqi. Both this poet and Firdausi presumably made use of such of the records (which had previously formed part of the extensive royal library of Persia) as had escaped destruction by the Arabs, together with the collection of popular stories and legends, which had been gathered by royal decree from every part of Persia during the last years of the Sasanian Empire, a version of which is known to have survived the period of Arab iconoclasm. Both poets probably also drew on the collection of traditional tales which Abu Mansur bin Abdu'r-Razzaq, Governor General of Khurasan, had in A.D. 957 commanded a number of historians and 'Mobeds' (Zoroastrian priests) of Khurasan to collect and inscribe in the form of a prose Shah Nameh. Daqiqi, however, was assassinated when he had completed only 1,000 verses, and it was left to the squire of a small village near Tus in Khurasan to undertake, unasked and unaided, the composition of an epic poem telling the history of Persia, from the earliest legends down to the Arab conquest, in so masterly a

fashion that his Shah Nameh at once captured the imagination of his fellow-countrymen, and won a universal popularity which has never since declined.

Abu'l Qasim Mansur (or Hasan) who took the pen-name of Firdausi, probably from the Bagh-i-Firdaus (or Garden of Paradise) which he is said to have owned, was born in about A.D. 935. The story of his life has been so embroidered with picturesque stories by biographers who lived many centuries later that the exact facts are somewhat hard to determine. From evidence afforded by his poems, and from the 'Chahar Muqaleh' (or Four Discourses) written by Nizami of Samargand, who visited the poet's grave less than a century after his death, it appears that Firdausi was the squire of a small village near Tus (not far from the present city of Meshed) who combined a genius for poetry with a bent for history and folklore. He seems to have undertaken the composition of the Shah Nameh in the hope that when it was complete some patron would liberally reward his labours, and so enable him to provide a dowry for his daughter.

Firdausi apparently commenced the poem in A.D. 974, that is to say at least two years before Daqiqi can have received the royal order to compose a verse Shah Nameh. After Daqiqi's death not only was Firdausi left without a competitor, but the defunct Court Poet's 1,000 verses were included by Firdausi in his own Book of Kings. After twenty-five years' arduous work Firdausi in A.D. 999 finished the first version of the Shah Nameh, but the book did not achieve its final form until another decade had passed, when in A.D. 1009 the poet took the seven volumes of his completed masterpiece to Ghazni to offer them, with a suitable dedication, to Sultan Mahmud, who had by then made himself heir not only to the territories, but also to the literary patronage of the

Samanian Emirs, the last of whom had been assassinated in A.D. 1005.

Through the good offices of the Wazir, Abu'l Qasim Ahmad bin al-Hasan al-Maymandi, the book was proffered to Sultan Mahmud, who expressed himself as delighted with it. When, however, the question of rewarding the poet arose, the Wazir consulted various persons, who, as Nizami of Samarqand expresses it, 'were continually casting the dust of perturbation into the cup of his position', and these, after proposing a gift to Firdausi of 50,000 'dirhams', added that this would really be too liberal a reward for one who was by persuasion a Shiite. The suggestion that it would be unsuitable to pay so large a sum to a member of an unorthodox sect seems to have appealed to Mahmud who was inclined by nature to both stinginess and religious bigotry. The Sultan accordingly sent the poet a reward of silver instead of gold coins, amounting in value to only 20,000 'dirhams'. Firdausi was so bitterly disappointed at this treatment that he divided the coins between the bath-man and the sherbet-seller at the 'hamam' where the money reached him, and fled the same night to Herat.

Before he left Ghazni, however, Firdausi contrived to get hold of the copy of the Book of Kings which he had presented to the Sultan. In it with his own hand he wrote a poem of reproach to Mahmud which is one of the most biting satires ever penned. A part of it runs:

'If the King had been of royal¹ blood
 He would have placed a crown of gold upon my head;
 If the King's mother had been of gentle birth
 I would have stood knee-deep in gold and silver.
 But since there has been no greatness in his tribe
 He could not bear to hear the names of famous men . . .

¹ Mahmud was the son of Sabuktagin, who had been born a slave.

If you were to plant in the garden of Paradise
A tree, whose nature is bitter;
If you were to water it from the fountain of Life,
And bedew its roots with purest honey;
In the end its nature would re-assert itself,
And bitter as ever would be the fruit it bore.'

Firdausi spent the remainder of his life in avoiding the vengeance of Mahmud. From Herat he travelled to Mazandaran, and thence to Baghdad, where, while living under the protection of the Caliph, he composed a long verse romance called 'Yusuf and Zuleika'. Finally, as an old man of over eighty, he returned to his native Tus to die.

Nizami of Samarkand relates that in A.D. 1020 Mahmud was returning from an expedition into India, and that, having called on a rebel chieftain to surrender his fortress, the Sultan mused in his Wazir's hearing as to what answer would be returned. The Minister (probably the same al-Maymandi) answered:

'And should the answer with my wishes not accord,
Then let us to Afrasiab's field with mace and sword!'

'Whose verse,' enquired Mahmud, 'is that? Its author must have had the heart of a man, for valour and swords rain down from it.' 'Poor Abu'l Qasim Firdausi composed it,' answered the Minister; 'he who for five-and-twenty years laboured to complete such a work, and reaped from it no advantage.' 'You speak well,' said Mahmud; 'I deeply regret that this noble man was disappointed by me. Remind me at Ghazni to send him something.'

'So when the Sultan returned to Ghazni,' continues Nizami, 'the Minister reminded him; and Mahmud ordered that

60,000 'dinars' worth of indigo should be carried to Tus on the King's own camels, and that apologies should be tendered to Firdausi. For years the Minister had been working for this, and at length he had achieved his object; so now he caused the camels to be loaded, and the indigo safely reached Tabaran (which was a part of the city of Tus). But even as the camels entered the Rudbar gate, the corpse of Firdausi was borne forth from the Gate of Razan. Now at that time there was in Tabaran a preacher, whose fanaticism was such that he declared that he would not suffer Firdausi's body to be buried in the Mussulman cemetery, because he had professed the Shiah creed; and nothing that men could say would serve to move him. Now outside the gate there was a garden belonging to Firdausi, and there they buried him, and there he lies to this day.¹

Besides the Shah Nameh, which runs to nearly 60,000 couplets, and 'Yusuf and Zuleika', a poem of 9,000 couplets, Firdausi wrote a great many lyrics. But neither his version of the biblical story of Joseph and Potiphar's wife, nor his lyrics, have ever been widely read or much appreciated by Persians, and it is on his Book of Kings that Firdausi's reputation as a great poet rests. Of the Shah Nameh Professor Cowell wrote: 'the versification is exquisitely melodious, and never interrupted by harsh forms of construction; and the poem runs on from beginning to end, like a river, in an unbroken current of harmony. Verse after verse ripples on the ear and washes up its tribute of rhyme; and we stand, as it were, on the shore, and gaze with wonder into the world that lies buried beneath—a world of feeling and thought and action, that has passed away from earth's

¹ From the 'Chahar Maqaleh,' translated by Professor Browne.

memory for ever, whilst its palaces and heroes are dimly seen mirrored below, as in the enchanted lake of Arabian story.'

The poem, appearing as it did at a moment when the national consciousness was reviving, served as a powerful stimulus to the Persians. Not only does the *Shah Nameh* breathe a spirit of patriotism, but it acclaims the virtues of courage and truth, from which the manly deeds of the heroes of former days are shown to have sprung; added to which the book is written in a simple straightforward style, and contains many observations full of common sense, which appeal greatly to the Persian mind. Firdausi took care to write the national epic in the language which the Arabs had done their best to supplant. The *Shah Nameh* is written in pure Sasanian Persian, with an admixture of only about 5 per cent of Arabic words. After its publication the process of assimilating Arabic words into Persian ceased; in fact an opposite process started whereby many old Persian words which had fallen into desuetude, were, as a result of appearing in the poem, rescued from oblivion and restored to currency in the everyday speech of the people. The Persian language, which had by then, it is true, a large number of Arabic words embedded in it, thereafter became once more the language used everywhere in Persia, and Firdausi had some reason for claiming that his epic had been a means of restoring his country to life.

Such is Firdausi's legacy to modern Iran: he rescued the Persian language from its eclipse by Arabic, and gave a final and supremely artistic form to the stories, legends, and history of ancient Persia, the oral tradition and surviving records of which were, two centuries later, to be lost for ever in the holocaust of the Mongol invasions. Khurasan lay on the direct line of march of the Mongol Horde, and to-day

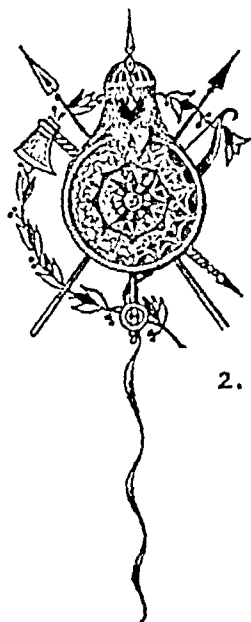
there is little to show that the city of Tus ever existed; but in spring the poplars still put on their green leaves in the Garden of Paradise, where Firdausi was laid to rest. On his tomb in that garden is inscribed the verse which the poet wrote in the assurance of his immortality:

‘I have laid the foundations of a lofty palace
Which neither wind nor rain can ever harm.’

در می کز تخ است وی را سرشت
 گریز برشت ای بیخ بهشت
 سرانجام کو هر بسیار آورد
 بهستان میوه تیغ بار آورد از روی

1. A tree whose quality is bitterness,
 If it should be uptaken by the root
 And planted in the soil of Paradise,
 Even there it would produce a bitter fruit.





بزرگی سراسر بگفتار نیست دو صد گفتار چون نیم کردار نیست (فردوسی)

2. Firdausi tells the Honourable Members to desist

From perorations—greatness doesn't in mere words exist;

No country yet by talk alone from tyranny was freed,

And twice two hundred words are not worth half one valiant deed.




سیاهی لشکر نیاید بچار
یکی مرد جنگی به از صد هزار دزدان

3. The black mass of an army,
Which fronts a soldier's eye,
Should never his brave soul appal
Nor make him dread to die;
He should with stouter heart advance,
Recalling, there and then,
That one real warrior is worth
A hundred thousand men.



دم مرگ چون آتشی بر لناک مذار دوز برنا و فر تو ت باک (فردوسی)

4. Age and Youth go down together
 In April or December weather,
 For soon or late comes Death;
 And though we hand in hand may stray
 Across the golden meads to-day
 Our fate on earth we know:
 The blossom which adorns the hedge,
 And dry reeds at the river's edge,
 Alike await the blow,
 The cold uncompromising steel
 Which we shall wake at last to feel—
 And know that it is Death.



پی فکتم از نظم کاخی بلند که از باد و باران نیاید کزند

5. Though Death may take me in his cruel clutch
 My verse will give men joy—
 It is a monument Time cannot touch
 Nor wind nor rain destroy.

FARRUKHI

Died in A.D. 1037

ACCORDING to popular tradition in Persia Abu'l Hasan Ali, who took the pen-name of Farrukhi, was one of the three poets who combined to try and snub Firdausi, when the latter first found his way to the court of Sultan Mahmud of Ghazni.

Farrukhi, who was an accomplished musician, started life as a harp-player in the service of a 'dehqan', or small squire, in Seistan. Reports of the munificence of Emir Abu'l Muzaffar of Chaghanian in Transoxiana led him thither to seek his fortune as a Court Poet, a career for which his aptitude for composing extempore verse well fitted him. Farrukhi eventually achieved the position of Court Poet to Sultan Mahmud, who held the poet in such high esteem that, as the author of the 'Chahar Maqaleh' relates, he appointed twenty servants 'girt with silver girdles' to ride behind him.

Farrukhi's official position as Court Poet imposed on him the duty of composing numerous 'qasidas' eulogizing his patrons, but his Diwan also contains much real poetry, and he wrote a work on Prosody, entitled the "Tarjumanu'l Balaghat" (Interpreter of Eloquence), which was famous in the poet's own day, but of which, unfortunately, no copy has survived.



ببر که بزرخان شادمانه بود درخت که من بروی بخارین آن بست فرخار برحق

6. The sensation of well-being,
Which my heart from yours receives,
Is like the deep content a tree
Finds in its fresh green leaves.



همی نماید بیت هسی فزاید شور همی برآید موجش برابر محور (فرخی)

7. The sea is baying like a wolf to-night;
 It springs in fury on the cliffs; but soon
 The waves in wild disorder will retreat,
 Obedient to the influence of the moon.



مراجعت خزان و چه روزگار بهار
چو در باد بودن بسی ز روی نگار
بهار کن نخ او بود و در اندام افا
برابر آید بر کن کون خزان و بهار (فردوسی)

8. When Xanthe comes I understand
How Earth feels when Spring's at hand;
When, in its dark ancestral core,
An impulse stirs to life once more,
And ere the storms of Winter pass
A hyacinth breaks through the grass . . .
When she is gone I only know
The chill of Autumn, and the snow
Which seals the heart and numbs the brain
When lovers never meet again.

B A B A T A H I R

Lived in the earlier part of the eleventh century A.D.

BABA Tahir is known in Persia as 'Uryan (the Naked), probably to denote the asceticism of his life and his contempt for worldly pomp. He was born, lived, and died at Hamadan, where he is buried in a simple tomb on the outskirts of the city.

Baba Tahir's poems have a charming freshness and sincerity, and are especially popular in the countryside, because the dialect in which he usually wrote is akin to the everyday speech of rural Persia.



ز دست دیده دل بر دو فریاد که بر چه دیده پسند دل کند یاد
 بسازم حجری خوش زو لاد ز غم بر دیده تا دل کرد و آزار

9. The loveliness my eyes desire
 Has set my heart so much on fire
 That I would gladly die—
 A dagger with a point of steel
 To plunge into my heart—and feel
 At last tranquillity.



یکی برزیکری نالان در این دشت
 به یکشت و به یغفت ای درین
 بخون ویدگان آلا لاله یکشت
 که باید کشت و بشت و رفت از این دشت
 (بیتا بر)

10. I saw a peasant in an upland field
 Who planted scarlet tulips; as he kneeled
 He poured a flood of tears upon the earth,
 And when I asked what gave such sorrow birth
 He answered: 'Toil no consolation yields
 When Death to-morrow calls me from these
 fields.'

OMAR KHAYYAM

Died in A.D. 1123

*He sang, in an acceptable way, it seems, of what all men feel in their hearts
but had not had express in verse before.*

Edward Fitzgerald

As nearly every edition of Fitzgerald's rendering of the *Rubaiyat* of Omar Khayyam is prefaced by an account of the poet's life, I need say little more than that in Persia Omar Khayyam is generally considered to rank fourth¹ in popularity as a poet after Firdausi, Sa'di, and Hafiz. He is, indeed, more highly regarded in Persia as a mathematician and astronomer than as a poet.

The main reason why Omar Khayyam, in spite of having written a number of matchless lyrics, is not considered by Iranians to be among the first flight of their poets, is that he wrote comparatively little verse. The standard edition of the *Rubaiyat*, or collection of his quatrains (published in 1926 with an introduction by Aqa'i Irani), contains 329 quatrains, of which, as the editor points out, 42 quatrains are not properly attributable to Omar Khayyam. This leaves only 287 quatrains, which is a meagre total when compared with the output of poets such as Firdausi, Amir Khosro, and Nizami.

Omar Khayyam's versatility in other directions was prodigious. He compiled the Astronomical Tables, in accordance with which the Persian calendar was reformed during his lifetime. He wrote a treatise on the Persian New Year Festival, in which he included a description of the properties of various wines, together with directions for preparing antidotes to avert any subsequent hang-over! His other works,

¹ Jami and Nizami are the other two most popular candidates for fourth place.

some written in Arabic and some in Persian, include 'A treatise on Algebra', 'An explanation of some difficult problems of Euclid', 'The Indian method of extracting square and cube roots', 'A handbook on Natural Science', 'A treatise on the Universe', 'The Creation and man's duty towards God', 'A method of ascertaining the weight of metal in gold jewelry set with precious stones', 'On the various climates of different countries', 'Arabic Poems', and a work on Metaphysics entitled 'A Garden of Hearts'. In addition, Omar Khayyam wrote a number of books on Philosophy, not even the titles of which have survived to the present day.



روزی که گذشت از او دگر یاد کن فردا که نیاید سست فر یاد کن
برنامه و که نشسته بیا و سخن حالی خوش باش و عمر بر باد سخن

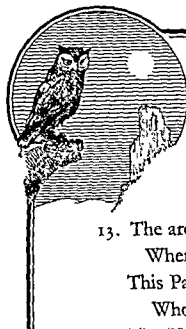
11. For scattered petals never sigh,
Nor for To-morrow vainly cry,
Be happy *now*, Dear Heart, and do not fear
That any moment of our love can die.



شیخی بزن فاحشه گفتا هستی هر روز بدام دگر می پابستی
گفتا شیخا هر آنچه گوی هستم انا تو چنانکه میسنائی هستی «عزیزم»

12. The Mullah to a harlot said:

‘When you entice men to your bed,
Do you not in your heart repine
To live a slave to lust and wine?’
But she upon his words broke in:
‘I am adept in every sin;
’Tis my career—can you profess
To follow yours with like success?’



آن قصر که با چرخ می زد و پهلوی
بر در که آن شهان نهادندی رو
دیدیم که بر کنگره اش نشانی
نمانده و می گفت که کو کو کو کو (چشم)

13. The arch is broken and the splendour fled
Where every aspect once was brave and fair,
This Palace none inhabits save the dead
Whose ivory bones the desert breezes stir.
The Hall of Audience desecrated lies—
Though Princes came to make obeisance here—
And from a ruined tower an owlet cries:
‘The glory is departed—where? where? where?’

ابر آه و باز بر سر برزخ کربت بی باد از غوان نمی آید زیت عمر نیست ام



14. The winds that wanton in the vale
 Have suddenly grown colder;
 The errant clouds which by us sail
 Weep on the green hill's shoulder;
 But we, whatever griefs or fears
 Make other men repine,
 Will drink, in spite of April's tears,
 The red, the sun-warmed wine.

ANWARI

Died in about A.D. 1190

*The sphere poetic hath its prophets three,
(Although 'There is no Prophet after me')
Firdausi in the epic, in the ode
Sa'di, and in qasida Anwari.¹*

IN the traditional rhyme, which I have quoted above, Anwari is allowed a position in the poetic hierarchy of Persia which by right belongs to the far greater poet, Hafiz. It indicates, nevertheless, the admiration accorded by his countrymen to Anwari for his exceptional skill as a writer of 'qasidas'.

The word 'qasida' is usually translated as 'elegy', but while in English an elegy is understood to mean a poem in lamentation for the dead, in Persia the 'qasida' is more often used to convey fulsome flattery to the living. Anwari's reputation as a poet, however, rests on a comparatively small number of 'qasidas' which are in no sense panegyrics. The most celebrated of these, *The Tears of Khurasan*, is a lament in which the poet graphically describes the destruction wrought in north-east Persia, during the year 1154, by a barbarous Turkoman tribe called the Ghuzz. Captain Kirkpatrick, whose spirited verse translation of this lament was published in Calcutta in 1785, considered it to be one of the most beautiful poems in the Persian language. 'The sentiments', he wrote, 'are throughout natural, and not unfrequently sublime; the images are for the most part striking and just; the diction is at once nervous and elegant, animated and chaste; and the versification, although not everywhere equally smooth and flowing, seems, notwithstanding, to be happily adapted to

¹ Translated from the Persian by Professor E. G. Browne.

the subject, the measure being, as I believe, the most slow and solemn that is used in Persian poetry.'

Anwari was born at Abiward, in the desert of Khawaran in north-east Persia, and accordingly adopted the 'takhallus' (or pen-name) of Khawari which he later changed to Anwari. He attended as a poor student the Mansurieh College at Tus, and profited so well from his studies that he was later able to boast of being a master of the arts of Astronomy, Astrology, Geometry, Logic, Music, Metaphysics, Natural Science, and Calligraphy, as well as of the more frivolous accomplishments of chess and backgammon.

Anwari appears to have had a poor opinion of poetry other than as a means of livelihood, and he is said to have abandoned his scientific studies, and to have taken to poetry as a profession, as a result of seeing an individual in glorious apparel and superbly mounted, with a score of servants in attendance, riding through the streets of Tus. On being informed that the stranger was a poet, Anwari exclaimed 'Heavens above! Am I so poor when the rewards of poetry are so great? By the glory and splendour of God, from to-day onwards I will devote myself to poetry, which is the lowest of my accomplishments!' Anwari is said to have composed that very night the 'qasida' in honour of Sultan Sanjar which commences:

'If Heart and Hand can rank as Sea and Mine,
It is this Heart and Hand, O Sire, of thine!'

This elegant piece of flattery so delighted the Sultan that he at once ordered an allowance to be paid to Anwari, and took the poet back with him on his return to Merv. Thereafter, until Sanjar's defeat and capture by the Ghuzz, Anwari remained his Court Poet, friend, and constant companion.

After his master's discomfiture Anwari sought refuge from the world at Balkh, where he died some time between A.D. 1189 and 1191.



شقایق بر یکی پایتاده چو بر شاخ زمرود جامه باده
 (۱۱ زری)

۱۵. The tulip's graceful chalice,
 Which God's own hand hath made,
 Is filled with glowing wine; it stands
 Upon a stem of jade.

NIZAMI

A.D. 1141-1202

I am like the honey-bee, which, though it inhabits a narrow cell, produces much sweetness.
Nizami (in his prologue to 'Khosro and Shirin')

SHAIKH Nizam-ud-Din Abu Mohammed Ilyas bin Yusuf is Persia's greatest romantic poet. He was probably born near Qum, in northern Iran, but lived most of his life at Ganja (the modern Elisavetpol, in Russian Azerbaijan). Nizami devoted himself in youth to Sufism, and his first book, which he produced at the age of nearly forty, was a collection of ethical and religious maxims entitled 'Makhzanu'l Asrar' (the Storehouse of Mysteries).

Nizami subsequently devoted himself to the composition of romantic and epic poetry. He wrote the love stories of Khosro and Shirin, and of Laila and Majnun, and a collection of stories entitled 'Haft Paikar' (the Seven Portraits), based on the life of the Sasanian monarch, Bahram Gur. His last book, completed shortly before his death, was an epic poem called the 'Iskandar Nameh', which depicts Alexander the Great as a mystic as well as a conqueror. These five works, known as the 'Khamseh' (or Quintet) have served as models for numerous later poets of India, Turkey, and Iran.

Professor Browne, after paying tribute to Nizami's genius as a poet, goes on to describe his character: 'He was genuinely pious, yet singularly devoid of fanaticism and intolerance; self-respecting and independent, yet gentle and unostentatious; a loving father and husband; and a rigorous abstainer from wine . . . he may justly be described as combining lofty genius and blameless character in a degree unequalled by any other Persian poet'.



کلم گوید و گزیده کوی چون در تمازا اندک توجہ سان شود پُر (نظامی)

16. Contrive, by rare economy of phrase,
 To fashion every verse into a gem;
 If brief his words, a poet can be sure
 Posterity will long remember them.

SA'DI

A.D. 1184-1292

*The rose can only bloom an hour:
My Garden will forever flow'r.*

From Sa'di's Introduction to the Gulistan

OF the two great poets, Sa'di and Hafiz, who were the ornaments of Shiraz during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries A.D., Sa'di is the more widely popular. Wherever a traveller goes in Persia he cannot help being struck by the frequency with which he hears the verses of Sa'di upon the lips of poor and unlettered people. For Sa'di is accepted as the universal guide and friend; he has a comment, as well as frequently a word of advice and encouragement, for every eventuality. His popularity is also due to the delightful aptness with which he expresses himself, and to his genius for clothing great truths in homespun garments of simple words, such as anyone can understand.

Sir John Malcolm, who wrote 130 years ago, considered Sa'di's influence on the Persian people as comparable with that exercised by the Quran itself. It is true that Sa'di's ethics are not always unimpeachable; in fact he writes, in the first story in the Gulistan, that 'an expedient falsehood is preferable to a mischievous truth'. But such sayings are quickly lost sight of among the vast number of admirable precepts, which describe how a man's life should be regulated in relation to God and his fellow-beings. It is indeed easy to forget such equivocal advice when one reads, later in the Gulistan, the verse which rings so magnificently true: 'Straightforwardness is acceptable to God: I never heard of anyone who got lost upon a straight road'. Or the line which denotes that Sa'di was

not only a great moralist but a very great lyric poet: 'Patience is bitter, but its fruit is sweet'.

Sa'di, whose real name was Musharaf-ud-Din, wrote a great quantity of lyric poetry, which is collected in his *Diwan*, as well as much other verse of various kinds. But he is most famous for his two great books, the '*Gulistan*' (or *Rose Garden*) and the '*Bustan*' (or *Orchard*). The *Gulistan* is a collection of stories, each of which ends with a poem in which the essence of the tale is distilled. The *Bustan* consists entirely of verse.

The *Gulistan* is the mirror of Sa'di's own life. 'Behind Sa'di's book', wrote Professor Cowell, 'rises in perspective Sa'di's own long life of adventure and travel, and it is this which gives to it its freshness and reality. The old man, as he writes, recalls the past scenes in which he himself has felt and acted; every desert journey, every night adventure, every caravanserai's guests, have added some figure to the long succession of images which his memory calls up from the past. His childhood and its quiet home, his studious youth, his restless manhood and settled age, are summoned in turn to "the sessions of sweet silent thought", and each brings its store of memorials.'

Sa'di, whose father and mother died while he was quite young, as a boy devoted himself to study, and he succeeded in obtaining a scholarship at the Nizamiyah College in Baghdad, which was then the seat of the Caliphate and a renowned centre of Islamic learning. The influence of the celebrated Sufi philosopher, Shihab-ud-Din Suhrawardi, under whom Sa'di studied at Baghdad, may partly account for the mystical element which is noticeable in many of his '*ghazals*'.

On his return to Persia, Sa'di found Shiraz so ravaged by the Mongols, that he decided to set out on his travels. He spent the next thirty years in travelling, and did not see Shiraz again until A.D. 1256. During this period he travelled through

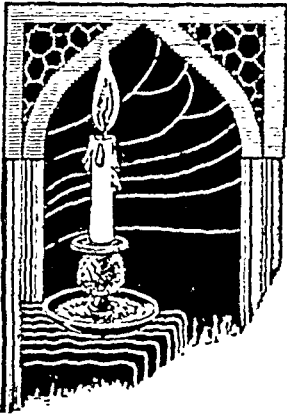
Balkh, Ghazni, and the Punjab to Kathiawar, where he visited the famous shrine of Shiva at Somnath. From there he directed his steps to Delhi, where he made a prolonged stay, and experimented in composing verses in the Urdu language, which was then in its infancy.

He next sailed to Yemen, where the death of a much-loved child (when and whom he had married is not known) spurred him to cross the Red Sea and brave the perils of a journey through Abyssinia. Later, having performed the pilgrimage to Mecca and Medina, he made his way to Damascus, where he settled for some time, and gained a wide renown for the sanctity of his life and the eloquence of his religious discourses.

During a period of Sufic contemplation in the desert of Judaea Sa'di was captured by a party of Crusaders, and set at work with other prisoners digging the trenches in front of Tripoli. He was eventually rescued by a rich friend from Aleppo, who paid ten gold 'dinars' for his release. Sa'di married his benefactor's daughter, but she proved quarrelsome, and he soon set out once more upon his travels. He visited Egypt, and journeyed through every part of Asia Minor, before returning to Shiraz in his seventy-third year. There he settled down to writing, and the year after his return published the *Bustan*, which was followed by the *Gulistan* a year later. Sa'di enjoyed a famous and tranquil old age, and died at Shiraz in A.D. 1292 at the age of 108.

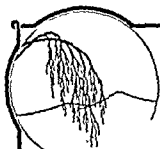
It is symbolic of the differing qualities of Hafiz and Sa'di that the former's tomb is situated within easy walking distance of the city of Shiraz, and is watered by the poetic Ruknabad stream, whereas the latter's lies several miles away across a stony waste. Instead of the grove of light-foliaged trees which greets the eye at the Hafizieh, the garden where Sa'di is buried is adorned by only a few austere pines; but their

foliage is everlasting, and the water which flows swiftly beneath the tomb is so pure and cleansing that the Shirazis bring their carpets from the town to wash them in Sa'di's stream. To my mind, no more than one green tree was needed to shade the tomb of the poet who wrote: 'To the eye of a discerning man, every leaf upon a growing tree is a book imparting knowledge of our Creator'.



سختی همه شب بر بیمار گریست چون صبح شد او مرد و بیمار بگریست (سعدی)

17. All night he watched expectantly beside
 His foe, who lay inert upon the bed;
 At dawn they found that he who watched
 had died,
 And lo! the sick man had been cured
 instead.



چوب تر را چنانکه خواهی پیچ
نشود خشک بجز باتش راست (سعدی)

18. A willow-branch reminds one that a youth
Can easily be bent towards the Truth;
Old reprobates a sterner fate require
For they will straighten only in the fire.

فقیروخته را شلغم بخیت به که نقره خام (سادی)

19. Since reading Sa'di's pungent line
 I shall not any more repine
 When, at some table where I dine,
 I meet a turnip.
 The turnip I cannot abide,
 It turns me anyhow inside,
 Of all the vegetables I've tried
 I can't stick turnip.
 But here's the truth in Sa'di's saw:
 A hungry man can fill his maw
 Not with mined silver in the raw
 But Lord! with turnip.



یا مکن بایسلبانان دوستی یا بنا کن خانه در خور پیل «سی»

20. Observe this precept whenever you can—
 Never make friends with an elephant-man;
 For an elephant-man has a pet to keep,
 Eating and drinking, awake or asleep,
 And if you are friendly one day you'll see,
 When the elephant-keeper comes to tea,
 That, not in the least by chance or whim,
 The elephant will accompany him.
 Then as soon as the animal's through the door
 You'll notice cracks in the parlour floor,
 And however much you may frown or stare
 He'll sit across-legged on an easy chair,
 And swill your tea with his cumbrous trunk
 Till you think 'My Word, what a lot he's drunk'.
 And if you should offer a mild reproof
 He'll be up from your table and off with your
 roof . . .
 In your sorrows you'll only sink deeper and
 deeper
 If you ever make friends with an elephant-
 keeper.



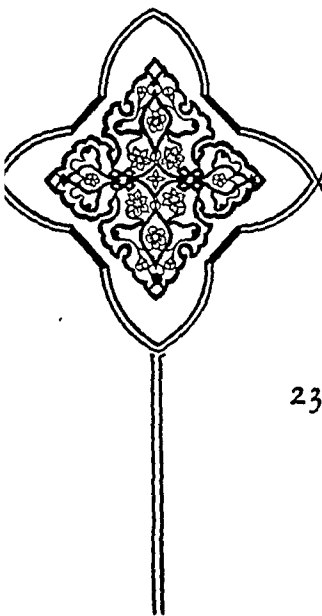
سب لائمه میان بکار آید روز میدان نه گاو پر واری (معدی)

21. When choosing a mount
 For a race or a hunt,
 Or to ride at the Front,
 Remember fat cattle
 Get blown in a battle;
 But a lean stringy horse
 Will stand up round a Course,
 And will never give in—
 Although he's too thin
 You can back him to win.



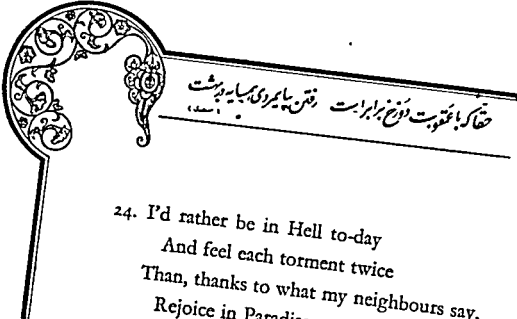
آن دو شاخ گادا اگر فردا شتی آدمی را نزد خود نمکذا شتی (سعدی)

22. The Bull to the Donkey one day said in jest:
 'Do you think that your ears or my horns are the best?'
 The Ass to this sally replied: 'Since a child
 My friends have described me as humble and mild,
 But if I had horns 'twould no longer be true—
 And I shudder to think what would happen to you.'



ز راز بهر خوردن بودای پسر
برای نهادن چه سنگ و چه زر (سعدی)

23. Gold can glitter strangely
 When hewn in some deep mine;
 Gold can buy you many things
 Including warmth and wine;
 But anyone amassing it
 In honesty must own
 There's hardly any difference
 'Twixt a nugget and a stone.



حقاکر با عقوبت فروخ برابر است / رفتن با میردی بسیار بد است

24. I'd rather be in Hell to-day
 And feel each torment twice
 Than, thanks to what my neighbours say,
 Rejoice in Paradise.

زن خوب فرمانبردار
کنده و دوش را پادشاه (سیدی)

25. Whose wife is tender, wise, and true,
In fact, Beloved, just like you,
Although he merits no such thing
Will live, as I do, like a King.



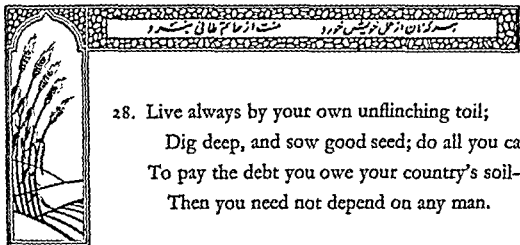
حکایت ۱ - سرگزشت زان نایب دلم و دلی زگرش زان دلم گشت مگر او قشنگ بود
 و دست مستوی کاشی زبهر برآید کوفه مرا دم و کنگره کردیم کوبی داشت
 سپاس نداشت که با آواهم و چه لی گفتی صبر کردم (بسیار می)

26. Aggrieved because I had no shoes
 I shuffled down the street,
 Till someone cried: 'There stumping goes
 ' A man who has no feet.'
 Then was I instantly aware
 That I from pain was free,
 And thanked God, the Compassionate,
 For all He'd given me.



هریشه گان مبرکه خالی است شاید که پلنگ خفته باشد
(مندی)

27. Although the sun shines bright,
 Though nothing stirs in sight,
 When traversing the desert
 Do not forget your gun.
 Although the plain stretched wide,
 Good men before have died,
 Who failed to see a leopard
 Curled sleeping in the sun.

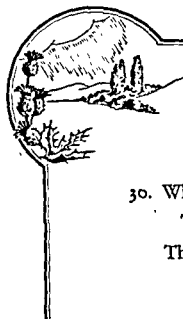


28. Live always by your own unflinching toil;
 Dig deep, and sow good seed; do all you can
 To pay the debt you owe your country's soil—
 Then you need not depend on any man.



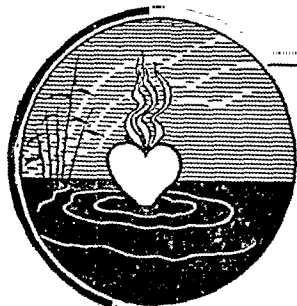
استاد و معلم چه بود کم آزار خرسک پازند کو دکان در بازار است

29. A King who has no aptitude for war,
 And finds the bread of idleness too sweet,
 Is like a Pedagogue who hears afar
 His pupils playing leapfrog in the street.



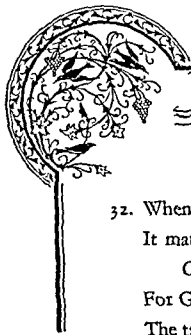
باران که در لطافت طبعش خلایق نیست در باغ سبز و در دیده در شور و زاریش (سعدی)

30. When raindrops from the heavens fall,
Tenderly and slow,
They nourish garden lawns—and make
The desert thistles grow.



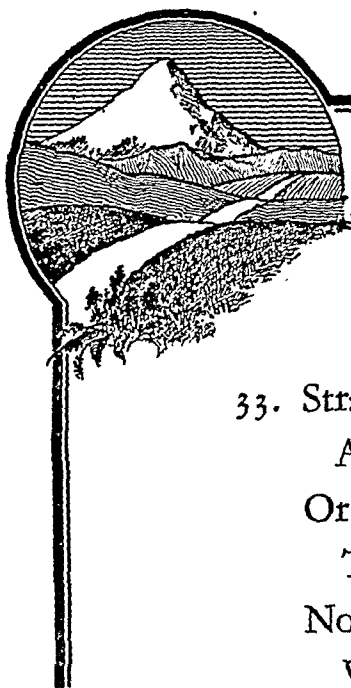
از درون سوزناک چشم تر نیمه ای در آتش نمی در آب
(سعدی)

31. My eyes o'erflow for what they most desire,
Whereas my heart is spent in passion's
fire;
Both ways afflicted, whither can I turn?
In floods I perish, or in flames I burn.



چو آهنگِ رفتن کند جانِ پاک چه بر تختِ مُردن چه بر رویِ خاک

32. When pure souls from their earthly bondage fly
 It matters not whereon their bodies lie,
 On throne or floor;
 For God is merciful—He ne'er forsakes
 The true in heart; and to His Kingdom takes
 The meek, the poor.



راستی موجب رضای خداست
کس ندیدم که تخم شد از ره راست
مستدی

33. Straightforwardness becomes a man
 As snow becomes a mountain,
 Or as becomes the hush at dawn
 The music of a fountain.
 No man has ever yet got lost
 Who in his heart would say:
 'In God alone I put my trust—
 He maketh straight the way.'



بیت از دست یار بیدار
 صبر در پیوم شوم گذار (سعدی)

34. O Nightingale, we bid you sing
 Of Youth, and Hope, and Beauty,
 As if to chant the praise of Spring
 Were your appointed duty;
 Too soon the Owl of Death will come
 With sudden haunting cry,
 Too soon we each must seek our home
 In the cold earth to lie.



مشین روترش از کردش ایام که صبر
مگر چنان است ولیکن بر شیرین دارد (سادی)

35. Patience, the lover cried,
 A faded mantle wears;
 Patience, the exile sighed,
 Is bitter as our tears;
 • Sour is its root
 Sa'di to them replied—
 But lol how sweet the fruit
 At last it bears.

AMIR KHOSRO

A.D. 1253-1324

AMIR Khosro, who was of Turkish race, spent most of his life as a Court Poet at Delhi, his father having fled to India from Balkh, in the north of Afghanistan, to escape the Mongols. He was one of the earlier masters of the Persian 'ghazal', the verse form which Hafiz later extended in scope and brought to perfection. He achieved great fame as a musician, and, by mingling Hindi words with Persian in certain of his compositions, did much to establish Urdu as a language. Amir Khosro is said to have written between four and five hundred thousand verses, and to have received gold equal to an elephant's weight from Sultan Qutb-ud-Din, to whom he had dedicated a book of poems.



چیسے درخت مچنے ہمیں گو کہ در حین
 بہرہ خوش است و سر خوش و جو بہار خوش

37. Within this scented garden close
 Whoso desires may win repose;
 An earthly Paradise it seems—
 Of cypresses, green lawns, and streams—
 And if your host you wish to please
 Converse of nothing else but these.

IBN YAMIN

Died in A.D. 1368

*Choose thou a cell—and take a book, wherein
The grace of all the poets thou shalt win.
And he who thinks with Ibn Yamin in this
Is not alone, but lives with them in bliss.¹*

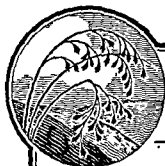
AMIR Mahmud ibn Amir Yamin-ud-Din Tughra'i, whom we know as Ibn Yamin, was of Turkish descent, his father having settled at Faryumad, near Sabzewar in northern Khurasan, a few years before the poet was born. As far as is known, Ibn Yamin spent most of his life writing poetry in seclusion from the world. When well over fifty, however, he emerged from his retirement to accompany Emir Mas'ud Sarbadar into battle at Zawa, near Herat, with the disastrous result that his collected poems were lost in the plunder of his tent by the victorious Heratis.

Ibn Yamin's poetry is rich in humour and common sense, and, like Vergil in the mood of the *Georgics*, he praises the contented enjoyment of a rural life:

‘If at hope’s journey’s end things go not well,
On the still threshold of contentment dwell.
If thou hast land, plough oxen, too, a pair,
Call one *Amir* the other call *Wazir*.’¹

The implication of the last line being of course that, unlike the usual variety of King and Minister, these two could be driven by the poet—and whacked, if necessary!

¹ Translated by Brigadier-General E. H. Rodwell.



چیزی که رفت رفت مکن یادِ او دگر
زیرا که تازه کرون غم کار عقل نیست (ابن یمن)

38. A grief that is past, let it pass
Like a leaf of the grass;
God intended not we bewail
That He made all flesh frail
For Death to prevail.

HAFIZ

Died in A.D. 1389

His style clear, unaffected and harmonious, displaying at the same time great learning, matured science, and intimate knowledge of the hidden as well as the apparent nature of things; but above all a certain fascination of expression unequalled by any other poet.

Sir Gore Ouseley in Biographical Notices of Persian Poets

SHAMS-UD-DIN Mohammed, who took the pen-name of Hafiz ('One who knows the Quran by heart'), was born at Shiraz early in the fourteenth century A.D. Little is known about his boyhood, but he is believed to have supported his widowed mother by working in a bakery at night, while pursuing his studies during the day at a 'maktab khaneh' (or class instructed by a mullah).

As a young man Hafiz studied under Shaikh Mahmud Attar, a Sufi of liberal views, who combined the functions of teacher with those of a dealer in fruit and vegetables. We probably owe to this teacher the fact that Hafiz did not become a narrow-minded ascetic, for if while young he had embraced whole-heartedly either Sufism or the orthodox teachings of Islam it is unlikely that he would have developed into a great lyric poet. For Sufism requires a surrender of the actualities of this world in order to become one with God. It entails a life of asceticism, and the only intoxication a real Sufi knows is the ecstasy induced by a devoted contemplation of the Divinity. Hafiz wrote a large number of 'ghazals' (odes) in this mystic strain, and many of his countrymen reserve their highest admiration for his mystical verses. Fortunately, however, for readers who are accustomed to the straightforward ideas and images of English lyric poetry, Hafiz did not surrender

himself entirely to Sufism. 'The Garden of Paradise may be pleasant,' he wrote, 'but forget not the shade of the willow tree, and the green margin of the fruitful field.' We accordingly find in the Diwan of Hafiz (or collection of his poems) many purely lyric poems, which express the delight Hafiz felt in the world in which he lived. The freshness and beauty of the images he used to describe thoughts evoked by a cool breeze at dawn, or by a first glimpse of the new moon, almost beguile one into believing that he lived yesterday instead of six centuries ago.

It is all the more extraordinary that Hafiz was able to write such lyrics, into which warfare and politics rarely intrude, when we remember that nearly the whole of his life was spent under the threat of invasion and sudden death. Between A.D. 1340 and 1352 his much-loved Shiraz was three times besieged and taken, and the year 1388 saw its capture by Timur, the terrible lame Mongol conqueror, who wrought so much destruction in Persia. A well-known anecdote describes the meeting between the Sultan and the Poet. 'How is it,' asked Timur, 'that when I have depopulated a vast number of cities and provinces in order to increase the glory and wealth of Bukhara and Samarkand, the ordinary places of my residence and the seat of my empire, thou, an insignificant individual, hast pretended to give them away in exchange for a mole on the cheek of thy mistress?' Hafiz replied, 'Sire, it is because of such prodigality that I am as poor as thou seest'. Timur is said to have been so pleased with this retort that he treated the poet with kindness and generosity.

Hafiz was fortunate enough to be recognized as a great poet during his lifetime, and before he died his fame had spread throughout the Persian-speaking East. So much so that Ghias ud Din Barak, Sultan of Bengal, sent him the

first line of an ode, which he begged him to complete, while Mahmud Shah Bahmani, ruler of the Deccan, and Sultan Ahmed of Baghdad, sent him pressing invitations to visit their Courts. But Hafiz, unlike Sa'di, was no traveller. He preferred to write 'ghazals' beneath a graceful cypress in one of the cool gardens of Shiraz to making dusty pilgrimages elsewhere. Perhaps partly because Hafiz saw less of the world, his poems contain far fewer moral precepts than those of Sa'di; but many Hafiz quotations have found their way into the proverbial lore of the Persian language. These proverbs are as beautiful and telling as Shakespeare's, and are quoted by Persians more often even than lines from Shakespeare are by us. One saying which is a general favourite in Persia is the Hafiz line, 'Patience and Victory have long been friends', which, for its truth and simplicity, deserves a place beside Shakespeare's 'Crabbed Age and Youth cannot live together'.

It is probably owing to the mixture of mysticism and clarity which confronts the reader of Hafiz that the Diwan has come to be regarded throughout Persia as a kind of Sibylline Book; and it is the custom of even those Persians who consider Firdausi and Sa'di to be greater poets, to consult (by opening the book at random and reading the first verse the glance falls on), not the Shah Nameh or the Gulistan, but the Diwan of Hafiz. So popular is this habit that many modern Persians consult the Diwan on the simplest matters—such as whether or not to set out on a journey—and abide religiously by the answer given by the book.

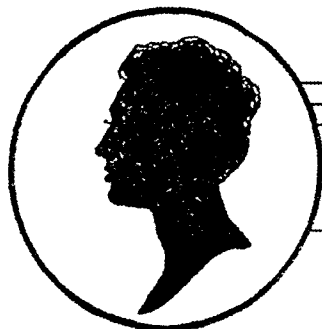
The habit of consulting the Diwan probably dates from the death of Hafiz, for it is related that, despite the mystical religious tenor of many of his poems, the Mullahs, whom Hafiz had severely criticized for their hypocrisy and worldliness, objected to his body being accorded the rites of Mussulman burial on the ground that he had been a free-thinker,

and guilty of heresy. They agreed, however, to settle the matter by a reference to his poems, which opened at the lines:

‘Fear not with pious tread
To approach where Hafiz lies,
For though his sins were red
His soul’s in Paradise.’

His dust lies in a garden watered by that Ruknabad stream, whose praises he sang, beneath an alabaster sarcophagus on which are written, in beautiful raised Nastaliq script, the words of two of the greatest of his odes. At the head, signifying that Islam has accepted the poet, is the quotation from the Quran:

‘God endures; all else passes away.’



صفت باثاق ملاحه جهان گرفت آری باثاق جهان میتوان گرفت (حافظ)

39. When loveliness and charm
 In every aspect meet,
 What wonder that the World
 Lies vanquished at thy feet?

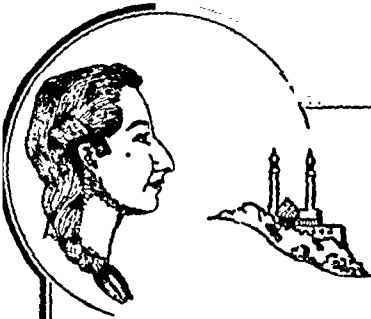


بجنگل شدم از توبه شراب نخل که کس با ذکر دارا صواب نخل (مانند)

40. Crimson roses in profusion
 Float their petals on the stream,
 While I wake in grave confusion
 From the mazes of a dream,
 Sighing: 'When so well together
 The bloom of wine and rose accords,
 Why should I, in such sweet weather,
 Shun the solace wine affords?'

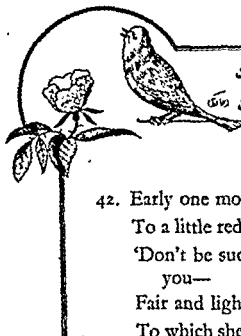
Bring wine, O Slave, that I may be
 Absolved from this apostasy.

POEMS FROM THE PERSIAN



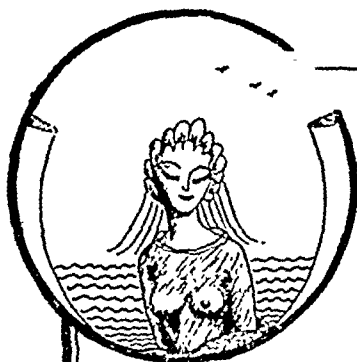
اگر آن ترک شیرازی بدست آورد دل ما را
بخال هندویش بخشم سمرقند و بخارا را (حافظ)

41. For a mole on the cheek of my darling,
Which the breezes of Shiraz have fanned,
I would gladly surrender Bukhara,
Or give back to its Khan Samarcand.



صبحی میں چین باگیں زونا گفت ہر کم کن کہ درین مرغی تو شکست
گل بنیدیکہ از دست زخمی ولی هیچ عاشق سخن نیست بشوق شکست

42. Early one morning the Nightingale said
To a little red rose-bud asleep in a bed:
'Don't be such a flirt, there are thousands like
you—
Fair and light-hearted, yet tender and true'.
To which she replied with a smile to her friend:
'The truth, between lovers, can never offend,
But what I object to, most loathsome of birds,
Is the tone you employ when saying such
words'.



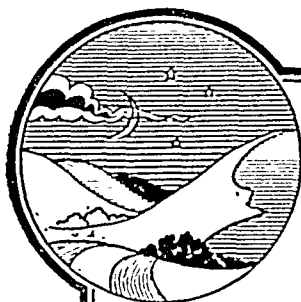
مژده ایدل که دگر باد صبا باز آید
 بیل خوش خبر از طرف سبا باز آید
 (حافظ)

43. Awake, O heart, an early breeze
 Is softly sighing in the trees;
 A swift-winged nightingale has brought
 Me myrrh and spices from the South,
 And rumours of the wonders seen
 Within the courts of Sheba's queen,
 Where amorous breezes gently stir
 Above the languid head of her
 Whose image still tormenteth me
 Across the golden foaming sea.



صبا بطقبک بگو آن غزال رخسار را که سر کجوه و بیابان تو داد و ما را حافظ

44. O Wind of Morning, rise and tell
 My Love, who like a white gazelle
 Forever loiters proud and free,
 That she shall no more torture me.
 Because of her, this summer day,
 Across the desert sand I stray
 To find, when day at last is done,
 The Vale men call Oblivion.



منز بهر فلک دیدم و داس مه نو یادم از کشته خویش آمد و بهنگام درو (مانند)

45. The fields of heaven which gleam before our eyes
Are fair as any vale in Paradise,
For these high pastures at the end of day
From turquoise green turn luminously grey;
And while her courtier stars expectant stand
The young moon comes, a sickle in her hand,
To reap the coloured clouds where day has fled,
And bring me dreams of all I've sown and
harvested.

JAMI

A.D. 1414-1492¹

One of the most remarkable geniuses whom Persia ever produced, for he was at once a great poet, a great scholar, and a great mystic.

Professor E. G. Browne

MULLA Nur-ud-Din Abdur Rahman adopted the 'takhallus' (or pen-name) of Jami partly in honour of the small town of Jam in Khurasan where he was born, and partly, as he himself relates, to denote that he had drunk the wine of Sufic philosophy from a mystical 'Jam', or goblet.

Jami received a thorough education, first at Herat and later at Samarqand, at a school founded by Timur, where he is said to have amazed his teachers by his mastery of Astronomy, Theology, and Logic. Jami returned to Herat to study Sufic philosophy under the celebrated Sufi divine, Shaikh Mahmed Sa'd-ud-Din Kashgari, the Grand Master of the Naqshband Order of Dervishes, who, on the day the young man presented himself at the Great Mosque and asked to become his disciple, exclaimed 'Lo! this day I have taken a Falcon in my Snare'.

The remainder of Jami's long and uneventful life was spent at Herat in devotion to literature, philosophy, and religion. At the age of nearly sixty, however, when famous throughout Persia and the Levant, Jami undertook a pilgrimage to the Holy Places of Arabia, during the course of which he also visited Baghdad, Damascus, and Tabriz. The great influence

¹ It should not be inferred that there have been no great Persian poets since Jami. In the seventeenth century, for example, Sa'ib of Isfahan and Abu Talib Kalim of Hamadan were pre-eminent among the many poets then writing in Persian. I have included some of their work in *The Golden Pomegranate*, a collection of verse translations from the poetry of Mogul India, which is being published by Thacker & Co. of Bombay.

exercised by Jami's poetry on the Ottoman poets of the sixteenth century can be traced in part to the esteem in which he was held during his lifetime by the Sultans of Turkey. Envoys from Sultan Mahommed II, bearing a rich gift of money and an invitation to the Court of Constantinople, reached Damascus the day after Jami had left, while Mahommed's successor, Sultan Bayazid II, a few years later sent a present of a thousand golden florins as a token of his unbounded admiration for the poet.

Jami's genius met with no less appreciation in Khurasan. He arrived back to find the last of the Timurids, the accomplished and scholarly Sultan Husain (A.D. 1473-1506), on the throne of Herat, and for the remainder of his life Jami was the chief ornament of that ruler's brilliant Court. Neither his life at Court, nor the adulation he received at home and abroad, tempted Jami to debase his talents, and unlike other Iranian poets of that and previous centuries he never tried to secure rich and powerful friends by composing eulogies. This independence and integrity of mind, together with the sweetness and simplicity of his verse, gained for Jami during his lifetime a dazzling reputation which the passage of five centuries has not diminished.

The subject-matter of some of the better known of Jami's ninety published works will serve to show the abundant versatility of his literary achievement. Besides three *Diwans*, containing his lyrics and odes, he wrote the '*Baharistan*', or '*Abode of Spring*', modelled on Sa'di's *Gulistan*, and a collection of seven long romantic poems entitled '*Haft Aurang*' (The Seven Thrones), which contains '*Salaman and Absal*' (rendered into English verse by Edward Fitzgerald); '*Yusuf and Zulaika*' (the story of Joseph and Potiphar's wife), '*Laila and Majnun*', and the '*Book of the Wisdom of Alexander*'—themes which seem to have had an endless

fascination for the poets of that age in Persia. Jami also wrote a large number of works in prose, including a great biographical dictionary of the Sufi saints, commentaries on the Quran, a discourse on the evidence of the divine mission of the Prophet Mohammed, and treatises on Prosody, Rhyme, Music, Arabic Grammar, and Acrostics.



ریخ بیگانه در سبزه بردن ز آشنای وطن بسی بهتر
 زین چو بگام خصم بود مردن از زیستن بسی بهتر

48. 'Tis easier to bear strangers on a journey,
 However far across the world you roam,
 Than suffer from the unexpected visits
 Of the friends one has to entertain at home.



دوست خواهم که جلوه عیب مرا
 نه که چون شانه بآید از زبان
 همچو آئینه روز بروز گوید
 پشت سر دهنم و در گوید «بابی»

49. My friend must be a man in whom
 I may a mirror find,
 Who tells my failings to my face
 And leaves no thought behind;
 Not like a comb, with hundred tongues,
 Which gliding here and there,
 Discovers and makes known my faults
 In secret, hair by hair.

QULZUM

Born in A.D. 1891

QULZUM, whose real name is Mahdi Khan Malik Hijazi, is a native of Yezd, and one of the leading poets of modern Persia. His principal work is the 'Haftad Mauj' (The Seventy Waves), published in 1929, in which he deals with new themes in the traditional style.



حسرتی که گفته اند میباید گفت درستی که گفته اند میباید گفت

30. The tyranny of silence shall be broken—

New shining words by us, the poets, spoken;
Whereas a diver threads dull pearls upon a string
We choose the words which soar—and give them
wing.

TAMAM SHUD

NOTES

DATES. It has not been possible to give the exact dates of the birth and death of every one of the poets represented in this book. This is partly due to the fact that the Islamic (lunar) year, in which the dates of the poets' lives have been recorded, commences annually on a different date. While, for example, the Hegira year 1365 started on the 6th December 1945, the year 1366 will commence on the 25th November 1946. Unless, therefore, a poet's exact birthday is known a discrepancy of a year, according to our calendar, is likely to creep in. As a matter of fact the old chroniclers rarely recorded even the year in which the poets were born. No one has any idea in what years Hafiz, Omar Khayyam, Anwari, or Ibn Yamin were born, and it is even disputed whether Baba Tahir really lived in the earlier or the later half of the eleventh century A.D.

Most of the dates I have given are as recorded in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, or in Professor E. G. Browne's great *Literary History of Persia*.

THE PERSIAN ODE. I would refer anyone who may question my judgement in selecting for translation individual couplets from various odes, particularly those by Hafiz, (rather than attempting to render the odes in full) to Walter Leaf's Introduction to his *Versions from Hafiz*, in which he furnishes the following explanation:

'In the Persian Ode we find a succession of couplets often startling in their independence, in their giddy transitions from grave to gay, from thought to mood. To the Persian each couplet is a whole in itself, a *mukta*, or 'point', sufficiently beautiful if it be adequately expressed, and not of necessity owing anything or adding anything to that which comes before or after. It is from the common metre and common rhyme alone that the ode gains a formal unity. As Eastern poets are never tired of telling us, the making of an ode is the threading of pearls upon a string; the couplet is the pearl, round and smooth and perfect in itself, the metre is but the thread which binds them all together.'

1. FIRDAUSI: 'A tree whose quality is bitterness . . .'

These lines are taken from the most famous of Firdausi's shorter poems—his satire on Sultan Mahmud. In my rendering I have dovetailed the meaning of two couplets, which are not consecutive in the original

poem. A literal translation of this passage is included in my biographical sketch of the poet. This was the second poem to appear with its illustration in the *Tehran Daily News*.

The remaining four poems are all taken from the Shah Nameh. The sparing use Firdausi made of Arabic words is shown by the fact that, among the sixty-six words which make up these five excerpts, he has introduced only one and a half Arabic words. They are 'nazm', meaning 'verse', in the translation which commences 'Though Death may take me . . .', and 'howlnak' (only the first half of which is Arabic), meaning 'terrible', in my rendering 'Age and Youth go down together . . .'.

13. OMAR KHAYYAM: 'The arch is broken and the splendour fled . . .'

Fitzgerald, in his notes on the fourth edition of his *Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam*, translated this verse as:

'The Palace that to Heav'n his pillars threw,
And Kings the forehead on his threshold drew—
I saw the solitary Ringdove there,
And "Coo, coo, coo," she cried; and "Coo, coo, coo".'

Anyone wishing to render this quatrain into English verse has to decide whether or not he is going to translate it literally. If he is, he must translate 'fakhteh', as Fitzgerald did, by 'ringdove'. But, as Fitzgerald presumably realized, the repeated 'ku' of the last line of the original verse stands for the Persian word 'kuja', meaning 'where?'.

The trouble is that Omar, in the original Persian, was able to combine, as one cannot in English, the actual sound of the ringdove's call with the question 'where? where? where?' (has the glory departed). Since the English mind associates the owl rather than the dove with ruined buildings, I took the liberty of changing the ringdove into an owl. This enabled me to put into its mouth the words 'where? where? where?', which not only literally translate the concluding words of the original poem, but approximate to the sound of an owl's cry.

26. SA'DI: 'Aggrieved because I had no shoes . . .'

As can be seen from the calligraphy, the original Persian is prose, not verse. It is, in fact, a story from the third chapter of the *Gulistan*, which runs as follows: 'I never complained of the ups-and-downs of life, nor frowned at the contrariness of the times, except on one occasion when my feet were bare and I had no money to buy shoes; aggrieved, I

entered the Congregational Mosque at Kufa (in Mesopotamia); seeing there a man who had no feet I praised God for the blessing of having feet, and bore my shoelessness with patience.' Sa'di ends the anecdote, as usual, with a verse:

'A roast fowl, to one who has eaten well,
Is less tasty than the leaf of a leek,
While, to a homeless wretch, a cooked turnip
Is as delicious as a roasted fowl.'

I wrote my verse rendering some months after I had left Persia, and Captain Hawley, of the Survey of India, was good enough to execute the design which adorns it, using as his model a pair of beautifully embroidered shoes which I borrowed for that purpose from the Khan of Manshra.

Captain Hawley also executed, in accordance with particulars which I furnished, the illustration for my rendering of Baba Tahir, which commences 'I saw a peasant in an upland field . . .'.

27. SA'DI: 'Although the sun shines bright . . .'

The first line of this couplet is one of the most disputed in Persian poetry. The argument turns on whether Sa'di wrote as the second word of the first line 'bisheh' or 'piseh': 'bisheh' meaning a thicket, and 'piseh' meaning something which is piebald. The question is complicated by the fact that the last word of the line—'khalist'—can mean either 'is empty' or 'is a spot'. The fact that the addition of only a couple of dots is required in Persian to alter a 'b' into a 'p', and three to turn an 's' into the letter 'sh', makes this problem even more difficult to solve.

The alternative versions are:

'Har bisheh guman mabar keh khalist
Shayad keh palang khufteh bashad.'

'Do not imagine that every thicket is empty;
Perhaps a leopard sleeps therein.'

and

'Har piseh guman mabar keh khalist
Shayad keh palang khufteh bashad.'

'Do not imagine that every piebald thing is merely a spot;
Perhaps it is really a sleeping leopard.'

The latter version is the one which appears in the copy of the Gulistan said to be written in Sa'di's own handwriting. I have compromised

(somewhat illogically) by having the former version calligraphed above my rendering of the couplet, while translating it in terms of the latter.

The decoration for this poem, which is one of my favourites, came entirely out of Plavinski's head. I like, not only the poise of the animal itself, but also the suggestion of bare hills in the distance which remind me of the Palang Kuh, or 'Leopard Mountains', on the western border of Scistan.

30. SA'DI: 'When raindrops from the heavens fall . . .'

In the version of this couplet which is generally accepted as correct the word 'laleh', which is the Persian for tulip, is substituted for the word 'sabzeh' (grass). This emendation, however, makes little difference to the sense of the poem.

In his illustration Plavinski has shown a glimpse of one of the green gardens of Qulhak, which lie below the barren stony hills.

32. SA'DI: 'When pure souls from their earthly bondage fly . . .'

The design which embellishes this verse was adapted by Plavinski from the pattern on a seventeenth-century Persian breastplate.

33. SA'DI: 'Straightforwardness becomes a man . . .'

The mountain in Plavinski's illustration is Mount Demavend, the 18,000 feet high volcano which dominates the view north-eastward from Tehran. The road in the foreground closely resembles the narrow white road which runs, with Mount Demavend always in the distance, straight across the hills from Tajrish (above Qulhak) to the Lashkarek valley.

37. AMIR KHOSRO: 'Within this scented garden close . . .'

I discovered the Persian of this poem carved on a marble slab at the entrance to the cypress avenue in the garden of the Deputy Commissioner's house at Mardan, in the North-West Frontier Province of India, where I was sent to officiate as D.C. in February 1944. After I had completed my verse translation I did a pen-and-ink sketch of the garden, adding in the background (to conform with the poem) a wall and water, which did not in fact exist. This drawing was later reduced in size and set in an appropriate frame by Corporal Bailey, of the Royal Signals.

Finally, through the courtesy of Lt.-Colonel G. E. Wheeler, the original verse was transcribed by a Persian calligrapher at the Foreign Publicity Office in Delhi.

38. IBN YAMIN: 'A grief that is past, let it pass . . .'

The leaves of grass which appear in Plavinski's drawing were brought back by me, to serve him as model, from an expedition into the Elburz Mountains, some of the ridges and declivities of which appear in the background of the illustration. I cannot help feeling that Plavinski, in spite of having adopted for this drawing the style of a woodcut, has succeeded admirably in suggesting both a luminous summer sky and the breezy arid expanses of a Persian mountainside.

39. HAFIZ: 'When loveliness and charm . . .'

The silhouette which adorns this verse is that of my wife. It was executed by Plavinski from a chalk drawing done in Qulhak by Madame Romer, sister of the then Polish Foreign Minister. Neither artist has quite succeeded with my wife's neck, which is more graceful than that which they have given her.

41. HAFIZ: 'For a mole on the cheek of my darling . . .'

This is probably the most famous verse in all Persian poetry, partly on account of its own merits, partly because it is the basis of the well-known story of the meeting between Hafiz and Timur-i-lang, and partly because it is to be found at the very beginning of the Diwan; the reason being that the poems are arranged in the Diwan in the alphabetical order of their rhymes, and this verse has the rhyme ARA of Bukhara. The Persian runs as follows:

'Agar an Turk i Shirazi be dast arad dil i mara
Be khal i hindu ish bakhsham Samarqand o Bukharara.'

It will be noticed how skilfully Hafiz has carried on the echo of the vowels in the word Turk (pronounced with a long 'u' in Persian) and Shirazi in the first line to the end of the second line, and enhanced the resonance of the already bell-like name Bukhara by adding to it the final 'ra' of the Persian accusative.

In the original poem there is a play on the word Turk, which I found impossible to bring out in my translation. By addressing his song to

a Turki maiden Hafiz implied that his Love was as cruel to him as the Turki tribes, whose summer grazing grounds are in the valleys round Shiraz, and of whom even to-day the lonely traveller must beware.

I composed my verse translation in the early spring of 1944 while staying alone at the Circuit House at Abbottabad, in the North-West Frontier Province, with a bad cold and a copy of William Ouseley's *Persian Miscellanies*. Ouseley's version, which was published in 1795, runs as follows:

'Fair maid of *Shiraz*, wouldst thou take
My heart, and love it for my sake,
For that dark mole my thoughts now trace
On that sweet cheek of that sweet face,
I would *Bokhara*, as I live,
And *Samarkand* too, freely give.'

This flows along charmingly, as does the version of Sir William Jones published a little earlier, in 1792:

'Sweet maid, if thou wouldst charm my sight,
And bid these arms thy neck infold;
That *rosy cheek*, that *lily hand*,

Neither of these translations refers to the girl as a Turki, probably because the name of this Persian tribe would convey no special idea of heartless rapacity to the English reader; but Sir William Jones goes a step further and omits to mention even the mole on which the comparison with Bokhara and Samarkand depends.

The most accurate, though far less graceful, translations are those of Gertrude Bell—in three lines:

'O Turkish maid of Shiraz! in thy hand
If thou'lt take my heart, for the mole on thy cheek
I would barter Bokhara and Samarkand.'

and of Professor E. G. Browne—in two:

'If that unkindly Shiraz Turk would take my heart within her hand,
I'd give Bokhara for the mole upon her cheek, or Samarkand.'

It is noticeable that the two latter scholars, unlike their eighteenth-century predecessors, have been beguiled by the ease with which 'kand' rhymes with 'hand' into translating the Persian phrase 'be dast arad' absolutely literally, and have allowed the maiden to take Hafiz' heart *within her hand*, which is not a thing one can do in English with a heart of a living person!

As, by the spring of 1944, many miles separated me from Tehran, I had to fall back on my own resources in order to provide an illustration for this poem. I did this by executing a line portrait in black chalk of the seventeen year old daughter of an Indian nobleman, whose family has for centuries lived in north-western India, and who probably has Persian blood in her veins. At any rate, she had the sort of face that I felt Hafiz might have loved, and a plait of ebony-coloured hair, which fell along her shoulder in a way that would fit well into the framework of the design. When the drawing was complete I had it photographed, in order to reduce it in size and enable it to be reversed—for I had drawn her looking towards the left. The final drawing, taken from this photograph, was executed for me in pen-and-ink by Captain Hawley, of the Survey of India, whose camp in summer lay close to us at Mansehra.

42. HAFIZ: 'Early one morning the nightingale said . . .'

I have described the garden in Qulhak, from which the rose in the illustration for this poem came, in a paper entitled 'Alms for Oblivion', which appeared in October 1944 in *Blackwood's Magazine*.

45. HAFIZ: 'The fields of heaven which gleam before our eyes . . .'

This illustration, which took a great deal of time and trouble to work out, to my mind succeeds in evoking the spirit of the poem. Plavinski's drawing is based on a preliminary sketch by one of our young Polish artists, Mlle Hélène Drozd.

50. QULZUM: 'The tyranny of silence shall be broken . . .'

I found this verse in *Modern Persian Poetry*, by Dr. Ishaque, which was sent to me for review in March 1944. I am glad to include these lines, which I have rendered very freely into English, because they express the aspiration of the poets of modern Persia to infuse freshness and originality into their compositions.

A LETTER FROM THE ARTIST

On active service

L.-Cpl. Plawinski Anatol, Eng. Arch.,
Polish Forces, C.M.F. 262.

Bari, Italy, 1.1.1946

Dear and honourable Captain!

Returning from long mission in Europe to my office—I have find 2 letters from you! It was very agreeable pleasure to me—and great surprise too. Irena with mother is transfered to Polish Settlement, Valivade—Kolhapur, India. Prof. Markowski is working in Beyrouth's University, as Professor of Graphical Arts; Helena Drozd in New York (married with american officer); most of Victory House polish artists—here, in the army. Ewa Filipowicz—allways with me, still as my secretary & my „right-hand draftsman.” My dear Captain—my dear mighty poet: how is with illustrations for your excellent books? Do you find somebody, who is able to understand your fine thoughts, as myself? . . . I am sure: not.

My poor English—I have many thinks to tell you—but my poor English! Two years! As two days! . . . Thousands of impressions—and hundreds of news! . . .

„The miles that lie between us

„May be keeping us from meeting,

„But they cannot keep a friend's thoughts

} How you find my
first „Poem” in
English?!

Well—

words. . . .

Please kiss, on behalf of myself, the hands of our inspiration: Madame Bowen—never to be forgotten Queen of the Pict. Deptm., Victory House.

Kindly send me few words. Best salutations for 2 Bowen Juniors.

Yours faithfully,
Anatol.

P.S.—By good! Forget to tell you most important: I spend long time in Rome & Florencia—studying arts & architecture. Have 2 medals & 2 stars! Ah, John, you will not be ashamed to meet me?!